1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Before the establishment of peace by European authority, however, cattle were commonly herded by young men, armed, and only the calves were entrusted to boys, who herded them near the homesteads; therefore moving to a boys' village did not coincide with the change of occupation. Even to-day it is not uncommon for some boys who have reached puberty to be found herding cattle. One we knew herded his father's cattle although he had reached puberty, because he had no younger brothers old enough to take over, and there were only five or six boys in his herd-group altogether. There are also cases where special circumstances put the age of moving later. In one age-village the boys leave home a little later than usual because there are leopards about and it is dangerous for small boys to walk from the village of their fathers to that of the boys, after dark.

When a number of the sons of a village of married men have reached the right age, their fathers give them a piece of land to one side of the parent village on which to build. There they build little huts of reeds for themselves, sufficiently well thatched to keep out the heavy rain, and there they sleep (*vide* Plate II). The building of the huts on this land begins in a playful manner, before the boys move. While they are still herding cows and sleeping at home they build miniature huts there in their spare time, but do not sleep in them. When they move they build slightly more substantial huts with better thatch. At the beginning, when a group of boys starts a new village, or when boys join one already formed, they do not all have huts for themselves: two or three friends share a hut. But later, as they grow older, each builds for himself.

Until he marries each boy hoes his father's fields in his father's village and eats food cooked by his own mother at his father's house, but he sleeps with his friends. Thus between the time when he leaves home and his marriage each is a member of two villages: economically he still belongs to that of his father; socially to that of his own contemporaries. Though bachelors eat at their parents' home, it is very rarely that they do not eat in the company of their own friends. A bachelor does not simply go home to eat by himself, but a group of bachelors, friends living in the same boys' village, go round together eating at the house of each one's mother in turn.

In an age-village of married men there are always several

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

ukwangala is only possible between contemporaries[1] they must build with contemporaries. The value set on *ukwangala* is thus related to the age-village; male contemporaries build together, and the company of, and good fellowship with, his age-mates is what creates a man of wisdom and character. Such is the Nyakyusa view of society.

For conversation to flow merrily and discussion to be profound there must be *ifyakwangalela*—'the wherewithal for good fellowship', that is, food and drink—and very great stress is laid on sharing these. Men and boys are expected to eat regularly with age-mates. Traditionally, fathers and sons never ate or drank together—to do so was held to be incompatible with the respect due from son to father—and men sought the company of equals at meals. From the time a small boy begins to herd he is encouraged to bring home two or three friends to eat with him, and in turn he visits each of them. Since boys have no fields of their own until they marry, but co-operate in cultivation with their parents, it is to their own mothers they go for food, and parents are proud of a son bringing many friends. 'Perhaps', said Angombwike, 'a son will come with his friends and cut a huge bunch of bananas, and take thick milk and eat with them. When the father comes back his wives will tell him: "Your son has eaten all the thick milk and cut a banana bunch!" Then he will ask: "How many men were with my son?" "Six!" "Ah, he's a chief!" the old man will say, smiling proudly.' 'And formerly if a young man came home often alone to eat, his father would beat him, or even take a spear and wound him, and when people asked why he would say: "This great fool comes *alone* to my place, again and again." It is good to eat with friends, for boys to go round in groups of four or five.'

After marriage each man is cooked for by his own wife, but he continues to eat with his friends, bringing them to his home or going to their's .The first wife to come to a young men's village is said to have a hard life. 'She has to draw water and cook for all the young men of the village—they come to drink, and to wash, and they beat her with a stick if she refuses them. No, the

[1] *Ukwangala* is sometimes used with reference to relatives as well as to village-mates, as in the phrase *'atikwangala kamunu nabakamu bake'*, meaning 'he is not on good terms with his relatives'; but in its fullest sense it can only be used with reference to contemporaries.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

husband will not be angry; if he were, he would be mocked at: "Did not your father provide marriage-cattle for this woman for you that she might be the wife (*unkasi*) of us all?" Sometimes, when the woman is cooking, her husband's friends come and take food out of the pot before she has finished cooking. When she protests, saying it is not yet cooked, the men say: "It is your work to cook, ours to eat." Then when her husband comes she tells him that so and so, and so and so, have eaten the food and there is only water left in the pot. . . . But when her husband's friends begin to get married they say to their wives: "That woman is really our wife! Listen to her!" And she has honour among the other women, and when they go to fetch firewood she walks with nothing, another carries her axe and head-pad.' This account cannot be taken literally—the first wife in the village does not provide *all* the food for her husband's friends, who still eat at their mothers' homes, nor do they have any sexual rights over her though they call her 'wife', but she must serve them as far as she can.

Sometimes, we were told, men's eating groups last a lifetime, but often friends quarrel or move, and the group breaks up. 'Perhaps one eats at midday and does not summon his friend, but only calls him to the evening meal, then the other, who always calls his friend to the midday meal also, is angry, saying: "He grudges me food", and they separate. They just stop calling each other to eat. Or sometimes one tries to seduce his friend's wife, and on that account they separate.'

Eating with contemporaries is still considered right and proper by Nyakyusa men, and it is generally practised by pagans, but the old men say that youths are less ready to share food than formerly. 'This custom of eating together is dying.' Certainly in Christian villages the practice has declined markedly. Many unmarried Christians eat with their friends, but the majority of the married men eat at home alone. Out of eight married men living in Rungwe, for example, only two ate together regularly, and the most educated group, the clerks, are notorious in the district for their eating habits. 'People are much shocked at the clerks for eating food alone. They say they are proud.'

Apart from eating regularly with certain close friends, well-to-do pagan men are expected to entertain generously, inviting fellow villagers to drink beer, or to a 'dinner party'—an ample meal with delicious dishes, very carefully served—from time to

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

time, and providing meat feasts at funerals and at the initiation and marriage of daughters.

As it is proper for men to eat with their equals it is improper for them to eat with their juniors, or with women. In the past fathers and sons never ate or drank together. Nowadays they sometimes do so, even though conservative pagans, especially if the fathers and sons have been working together. Three reasons are adduced for the change: first, the example of Europeans and Swahili; secondly, the fact that the country is at peace and it is safe for all the men to drink together, whereas formerly, when there was constant danger of attack, the young men were forbidden to drink at all; and thirdly the fact that young men earn money and buy beer for themselves which they may invite a 'father' to share (*vide* Document p. 194). When the Nyakyusa drink beer they replenish the pot repeatedly with boiling water, and men expect to have the water boiled for them by a woman. As Mwambuputa explained, 'Sometimes my son brings his pot (of beer) to my place and calls his friends saying: "We will take the pot to mother's house and she will pour in water for us." Then they come to my place, and they invite me to drink, and I accept, and we drink together. How can I grudge my son beer when I have some? Did he and his friends not entertain me?' The change turns on the fact that a young man can earn money and buy beer for himself while yet unmarried. Formerly no unmarried man commanded millet for brewing. Now, when he is drinking in his father's homestead he cannot but invite his father to join him.

Women commonly eat alone with their young children and unmarried daughters. Sometimes co-wives who are good friends eat together, but they have no obligation to do so, and in a big homestead perhaps only two wives will eat together and each of the others eat alone. More usually a woman sends a dish of food to each co-wife to eat in her own hut. For a woman to eat food with a man is considered quite impossible. In those families in which men no longer ate with neighbours one or two ate with their young sons, but we heard of none who ate with their wives. The example of Europeans did not influence them to this extent.

It is admitted that women also enjoy company and profit from it, and it is considered good that they should get on with their fellows, but there is no suggestion that it is a woman's duty to

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

cultivate her mind by conversation, or to eat regularly in company. In more formal hospitality there is the same difference; a woman never invites her friends to drink beer with her, or to a 'dinner party', as her husband must do if he is to have prestige with his neighbours. Women only share the ritual feasts at initiation and marriage, and at death.

There are local variations in Nyakyusa rituals, notably between the Kukwe and Nyakyusa proper. But everywhere there is an obligation to provide feasts at the funerals and marriages of dependants. When his wife or unmarried child dies, a man must kill cattle for his relatives and neighbours to feast at the burial,[1] while an heir provides a feast for his relatives, and the neighbours of the 'father' from whom he has inherited. At these feasts equal portions of meat are allotted to relatives and neighbours—or were so allotted until the rights of neighbours to meat at funerals were formally limited (*vide infra*, p. 93). An heir must also brew beer, or kill a bull, to feast the deceased's neighbours when he begins to cohabit with his widow, or moves the property from his village. At the initiation and marriage of a girl there is a series of feasts (five in Selya), the food for which is provided partly by the groom's family and partly by the bride's; and if, as is usual, the bride is still a virgin or has been deflowered by the groom himself, he must provide a bull in thanks for her virginity (*engambako jabusungu*), which is killed to feast the neighbours and relatives of her parents. The carcass is divided into three portions, one for the immediate neighbours of her father (men), one for 'those relatives with whom the father is on good terms and exchanges cattle', and one for the 'mothers' of the bride. Women as well as men eat meat and other fine food at all the marriage and funeral feasts.

The third occasion on which a feast for the village neighbours is thought to be essential is when a man or woman has offended his (or her) neighbours, or the neighbours of a 'father'. Thus a woman who has shirked her duty of advising on the division of her brother's inheritance, and is disapproved of by her neighbours on this account, begs pardon of them over a brewing of beer (*vide infra*, pp. 107, 236); a son, having insulted his father's neighbours

[1] For the circumstances under which other relatives must provide cattle for funeral feasts see Godfrey Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial', *Bantu Studies*, Vol. XIII (1939), p. 18.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

by insulting his father, begs pardon of them by bringing a bull which his father may eat with them; or a daughter-in-law, having inadvertently caught sight of her father-in-law, brings beer for him to drink with his neighbours.

At all feasts food is allotted in terms of kinship and village affiliation, and this tends to enhance the solidarity of kin groups and villages. For example, funeral meat is first divided between relatives and non-relatives, and that allocated to non-relatives is subdivided by villages, each village headman present being given a share to divide between his people, men and women. When a relative of the chief has died, and the whole country has come to mourn, the chief allots a cow to each of his senior headmen, who then divide the carcasses between the villages in their respective halves of the chiefdom. The meat at a 'coming out' ceremony, and at the great feasts which were held after battle, was divided in the same way, and we saw a division of this kind when a senior headman who had been in exile was welcomed home (cf. pp. 273–4). Thus the right to share in a feast depends either on kinship with the provider, or on membership of a village.

The Christians' code of hospitality differs somewhat from that of the pagans: the latter stress feeding *neighbours*, whether it be in the daily eating together, or at informal beer and dinner parties, or at ceremonies, while the Christians stress feeding strangers, quoting the text 'I was a stranger and ye took me in'[1] and the parable of the Good Samaritan.[2] The pagans jibe at the Christians for being inhospitable because (as the Christians themselves admit) they entertain their neighbours less than pagans do; the Christians point to their wider obligations, and the fact that they do feed and house visitors from a distance, especially fellow Christians gathering for Church festivals. The Christians are very conscious also of the difficulties of hospitality in a monogamous household, for a wife must not only do all the cooking for visitors (and many Nyakyusa dishes require considerable labour to prepare), but she must also help to grow the food. The pagan who can afford to entertain much has several wives who share the work between them, whereas a Christian, no matter how rich, cannot have more than one wife and remain a member of his Church—unless it be one of the two small independent

[1] Matthew xxv. 35.
[2] Luke x. 29.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

to bring all the herds of the village for treatment. The father of these twins explained that neighbours would suffer less than relatives, if left untreated, but 'their legs would ache a little *because we eat with them*'. And here we come to an idea which appears in many situations in Nyakyusa life, the idea that contagion is spread through eating together. Relatives of parents of twins are not thought to be in danger until they eat or drink with one of the parents: the ritual is performed so that they may eat together safely. Similarly a murderer and his relatives are thought to be in magical danger from the relatives of the murdered man only if they should eat or drink with them. So too, the bond between neighbours which puts them in danger from the impurity of one of them is the sharing of food.

At the initiation and marriage of a girl, neighbours again assist and identify themselves with the principals. When she reaches puberty a girl is secluded, and her companions in the village—the girls who are her immediate juniors, for the older ones will have joined their husbands—keep her company. Some are her own younger sisters and half-sisters, others are not related at all. Should one girl of the village not join them she is not accused of witchcraft, but it is unusual for one to stay away; to do so would show 'pride' (*amatingo*). These companions (*abapanji*) sleep and eat with the 'bride' (*unsungu*)[1] and share her tasks and lessons, fetching firewood, making mats, learning songs, and listening to the instruction of 'the mothers'. They and the 'bride' go about together as a group and, accompanied by one or two 'mothers', may visit a 'bride' and her maids in another village, the two groups competing in dancing and singing. So keen is the rivalry that formerly, we were told, the visits sometimes led to fighting between the maids and 'mothers' of each 'bride', particularly when the competing groups came from different chiefdoms. At the end of the ritual two of the maids accompany the bride to her husband's house, and spend a few days with her there, sharing the attentions of her husband at night (*vide infra*, p. 87).

During her seclusion the bride avoids her father, whom she refers to as 'father-in-law', and she avoids also all his contem-

[1] *Unsungu* means a girl who has reached puberty but has not yet borne a child. She is usually, though not invariably, betrothed, and her 'husband' has a part in the puberty ritual. There is no exact English translation, and we think that 'bride' is the least misleading in this context.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

6. CHANGE IN THE RELATION OF FATHERS AND SONS

Record of G. W.

561 177 264 Mwambuputa, the headman, was building himself a new house *with the help of six other men*. He invited us to wait and join in the beer and bananas, which were about to be served.

A boy came to call two of the builders to enjoy the company (and food?) of some other friends. They went off. It turned out that these two were from the boys' village, Katumba, one being a 'son' of Mwambuputa, and the other a friend of this 'son'. They had been eating and drinking with the rest of us.

Q.: 'In the old days, would these two have eaten and drunk with you—boys with men? Would you have called them to help you build?'

'No, formerly that was not the custom. Though we should have called them to help us build, they would not have drunk beer, and they would have eaten their calabash of milk separately, over there (pointing to a corner of the hut), while we men were here with our food and beer.'

Q. 'How is it then that the customs have changed, that now you eat, and even drink, with them?'

'You brought it yourselves, you Europeans. You sit down with your children at table and eat together, and the Swahili do the same. So we say: "He! Formerly we hated our children!" We said: "Eat over there." Let us eat with them!'

Q.: 'No, that does not convince us at all. The Europeans are strangers. How many of you have been into a European's house and seen them eating? Only the house-boys!'

Mwambuputa: 'All right, ask the others!'

Mwalubunju: 'Let me speak! In the old days, because there was war, we objected very much to the young men drinking beer with us. If we all drank together and the war cry was raised we should all be defeated. And men did not begin drinking in the morning, never! They began in the late afternoon when the cows came home . . . and in the evening each went home to his own house . . . but now, since the country is at peace, the young men also drink beer.'

Q.: 'Yes, but still I don't see why you drink *with* them. Why not give them a separate pot? And you eat with them, too.'

Mwambuputa: 'Because, as Mwalubunju has said, the country has fallen to you. It is at peace and there is no war, so the young men buy

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

their own beer.[1] Sometimes my son brings his pot to my place and calls his friends, saying: "We will take the pot to mother's house. She will pour in water for us." Then they come to my place and they invite me to drink and I accept and we drink together. How then can I grudge my son beer when I have some? Did he and his friends not entertain me'?

[1] This, of course, is not so much a result of peace as of new opportunities of gaining wealth on the Lupa gold-fields and elsewhere, but to the Nyakyusa the two things go together as 'European times' (*ikisungu*).

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

11. WITCHCRAFT AND LUST FOR MEAT AND MILK

Mwainumo (*clerk*).

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'Some "defenders" (*abamanga*), when they smell something delicious in the house of a relative or a close friend, say: "The meat (if it's meat) smells nice, give me a little to eat, I am a witch, the pythons will rouse up and carry me off to throttle someone." This can only be said (and it is said quite seriously) in the house of a relative or great friend because in no other house can a man ask for meat. Shame prevents him. People think a man who asks for food is a fool.

'Some people, when they have eaten a little and finished, say: "Give me a little more, if we witches are grudged food the pythons rouse up!" It is said that throttling is in order to eat delicious food (*ukupita ko kulya ifiñafu*). The witches say human flesh is delicious, and the milk of cows is also delicious.

Some people will eat cooked food which has been left over-night; others refuse it, and when asked why, say: "It is forbidden for us witches to eat cooked food which has stood over-night." I have heard this said often. "The defenders" say it spoils their pythons. Chiefs do not eat kept food either; it is said to spoil their *ifingela* medicine. People say that it is bad for chiefs or witches or "defenders" to eat left-over food because it has been touched by the ancestors at night. This is often said by "defenders" as well as others.'

[p. 218]

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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3. The beer of the 'gasping cough.' Mwasilemba on the left

[Facing p. 84]

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

byre or strike a beast with a stick 'until the twins had grown up' (an elastic phrase), 'but if he has no sons to milk a doctor comes and gives him a medicine to drink in the house, then he can milk the cows outside. To enter the byre is altogether taboo.' He and his attendant during his seclusion drink the milk of one cow only, which has been specially treated. All his wives avoid milk until the end of the ritual and the mother of twins herself 'can only begin to clean the byre after she has borne at least one other child'—some say two or three other children. If a cow is given her for milk (after the end of the ritual) it is taboo for others to share that milk. If these taboos are broken it is said that the cattle will purge and die, or their legs will swell.

It is also taboo for a parent of twins to pass behind people—he (or she) must always pass in front. 'They fear that if he passes behind, he (the parent) will always have twins.'

Twins, and their parents who have been through the full ritual, are thereafter immune from the danger of twin birth and may even go in to greet a mother of twins—Mwakobela's sister, who herself had borne twins, entered his wife's seclusion hut. There are, however, two or three taboos which apply to twins in later life. It is taboo for one of a pair of twin girls to get married without the other. Angombwike explained:

> If a man comes wooing the first he must do it secretly, and when he speaks to her father he must do it secretly, he may bring cows but no one knows about it; if it becomes known they say the younger might curse herself (*akwibusa*) and die. Then when another has come wooing the other, secretly, the father tells them both to come wooing openly *on the same day*. They come with cows. Then the father summons all his children, and the twin girls, and tells them: 'These men have come to marry you, do you like them?' And he asks the elder (*mkasa*): 'Which do you like?' She chooses. Even if she chooses the man who came for her sister he must accept, and if he tries to protest people will hush him up at once, for it is the custom for the elder to get married first. Then the younger (*mwinikila*) says she likes the other one and their father takes the cattle. If either one is wooed secretly before the other she must stay quietly at home till a wooer comes for her sister. If she did not (whichever way it happened) the other might die. It is common knowledge in the boys' village here that of X's twin daughters a lover has only come for the younger, none for the elder. And so both are still unmarried.

Twins and their parents, the fearful ones (*abipanya*), and other people who have been treated with medicines, eat first-fruits of

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

264 789 millet, beans and pumpkin with medicines. 'We fear lest the medicines we have drunk will turn round in the belly';[1] and they must be buried in a hut. 'If they are buried outside there will be drought and famine.'

845 842 *(b) The overt purpose and symbolism*

The overt purpose of the twin ritual is plain to all Nyakyusa. Twin birth is thought to be contagious, causing other twin births, and also to make men and cattle ill. The ritual is to prevent this. Mwambelike, a middle-aged pagan, was explicit on the point:

People are afraid to go to the house of a man with twins. They think that they will have twins themselves if they do, and we do not like twin births; they are taboo in the country. Or perhaps their legs will swell, or their bellies, or faces, if they go to his house. So we go to a doctor and he comes and sprinkles all the people in the village, even tiny children, and all the cattle. He takes a banana stalk to burn the twin birth (*pakolya ipasa*). He burns us because of the twin birth. The water is hot and medicated. He sprinkles us all with it and when we have all been treated we say we have been burnt because of the twin birth.

753 When a man has begotten twins we are in awe of this Kyala (*takukeba Kyala uju*). . . . If people drink out of the same vessel as the parents of twins, or if the father of twins sleeps with his other wives, this makes the disease increase, the disease of swelling legs and stomach; men catch it, the wives catch it, the children and fathers of the wives catch it. There is also a twin ceremony for cattle; if a cow drops twin calves we fear the same things. You, your wife and children drink medicines, and the cows are all sprinkled with medicine—but not your other relatives, or neighbours.

Mwakobela himself said:

If I did not wash and went to eat with my relatives, my legs would swell, I should pant and gasp. Swelling of the legs is due to our shades (*imindv gyetu*) or perhaps Kyala beneath is angry (*Kyala pari akalele*).

845 References to Kyala as the cause of twins are frequent:

KASITILE: The shades are in twin birth, and Kyala is there—it is he who gives two children. We drive them away. Kyala and the shades are together. When we bury the *ilibalaga* in the banana grove I say: 'Kyala, leave my bellows (which means my wife) for me, you shades leave it for me.' If the shades are angry perhaps my penis is broken in copulation.

MWAIKAMBO: I have not heard people speak of the shades in twin

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 54.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

allowed to escape; it has *ifingira*, the most powerful of all drugs, and is divided between the chief and the great doctors, who alone may cut up a lion's carcase. Another very powerful drug is *ilibebwe*, which, if cast into a doctor's house, destroys the virtue of all his medicines; and if carried through a garden will wither up all crops; it is therefore *mwiko* to possess it unless one is a doctor.

The code of manners includes prohibitions against speaking with the mouth full in the presence of elders; the elders will curse the offender with dire results; against spitting, for sorcerers only are great enough to dare, and one may be accused of sorcery. If a great man is passing, one must sit right down on the ground to salute him; to sit on a chair or any kind of seat is grossly bad manners, and is *mwiko*; it is followed by the unspoken but unfailing curse. Nakedness, even among the unclothed Konde, is a serious offence; at the least a small apron of leaves must be worn, for sorcerers go naked at night, and a charge may lie against anyone found unclad. If a stranger, notwithstanding the prohibition against it, asks for food, it must not be refused: how do you know that he is not a friend of Kabeta, who will send lions to punish you for churlishness! A woman must not eat while the males of her family are eating; if she does, her husband will talk to her presently. When on a journey, the young men must go first to face the dangers of the road; it is *mwiko* for the elders or chiefs to be in front. If two companies meet, they must not mix; each keeps its own side of

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

content with maize roasted on a piece of tin, or a few potatoes roasted in the fire. I have known them, too, going perforce for a long time and quite uncomplainingly, without salt, or any kind of relish for their food. For all these drawbacks are fully compensated for when the white man kills game; then they gorge; then the astonishing capacity of the native to take in food is seen at its best, or worst. A friend of mine once, far up in the mountains, killed an eland, and, leaving his men to deal with the carcase, went to his camp. His men kindled a fire at the ndkill, a sat down to feast; when they returned to camp in the early hours of the morning, one man was missing, and his dead body was found where he fell, killed by his own immense greed, aided by a heavy rain which set in during the night.

But while feeding arrangements "on safari" are primitive in the extreme, the ordinary household arrangements are by no means so. The housewife operates with a great variety of pots, baskets, calabashes, and some women are celebrated cooks. A possibly mythical story of olden times tells how two chiefs went to war for the possession of a great woman, who was the wife of one of them, and was widely distinguished for wisdom and sagacity, and for her unusual culinary skill. She was secured by the attacking chief, and lived with him quite happily as his chief wife; an unusual honour, for it is a rule that captured wives never attain to that distinction.

The Konde, like most Bantu peoples, are noisy

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

• 264 [521] eaters. The loud smacking of many pairs of lips round the camp fire makes a quite surprising noise; to which is added, especially if there is *nyama* (flesh), a sustained conversation carried on in a loud voice, making a din which is only ended by an angry shout from the European, who has himself long ago finished his repast, and cannot sleep in the uproar of the feast.

If their table manners in this respect leave much to be desired, in others they are beyond reproach. They carefully wash their hands before, and their mouths after eating. For the hand, the right hand, which is the "eating" hand, is almost their only implement; but I have often watched my carriers make spoons of folded leaves, with which they neatly scooped up the cooked maize, or whatever else they were eating; and I have myself frequently drunk water scooped from a passing stream with a similarly folded leaf.

The one great meal a day is a mighty feast, and one's girth is considerably increased when it is over. Little children literally protrude in front, and their entire nakedness makes the protrusion very obvious. But while the Konde look forward to the evening meal as the event of the day, the practice of eating twice, or even thrice, is growing; and I have never known anyone being averse from eating, and that heartily, at any hour of the twenty-four. Eating by families is unknown, would indeed be bad manners, for the men eat first, and the women only after their lords are satisfied. A few Christian families are beginning to

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

A few Christian families are beginning to [777] 264

eat *en famille*, but the practice is not looked upon with favour. The open air meal in good weather of course gives way to the meal in the house when it rains.

The far-stretching banana groves in which the villages are hidden indicate one of the favourite foods of the people. There are many kinds of banana, from the tiny "Lady's Fingers" to the great plantains, half an arm long; and they are eaten in almost as many ways. Some are eaten direct from hand to mouth, peeled and corded, for even the small cords which adhere to the fruit after the skin is removed, are meticulously attended to; other kinds are cut up and cooked; some are ground into flour, of which porridge is made, or it is added to the flesh pot to give flavour to the soup. 262 252

Maize is cooked in many ways: whole, mashed, or ground; boiled or roasted; mixed with other foods, or alone. The porridge made from maize flour is a greyish sticky-looking mess, wholly repulsive to a white man, and is often eaten without relish of any kind. Cassava, with the poison washed out by three days' soaking in running water, then dried and ground into flour; beans, with the skins removed by parboiling, and pressed between finger and thumb; peas cooked without preparation; potatoes, often eaten with milk; these are main food-stuffs, but very many small herbs are used, especially for seasoning, and some very pleasant dishes are often served up to feed sick and well alike.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

crops are planted at different seasons of the year so that there is always some hoeing to be done.

In a polygynous family each wife has her own fields (*mbaka*), hoed by her husband and her own sons, which she plants, weeds and reaps with the help of her own daughters, and the produce of which she uses to cook for her husband, her own children and herself. The relative rights of husband and wife to dispose of produce vary with different crops, but no co-wife has any rights over a woman's food. She may, and often does, ask her co-wives to help in her fields and sends them presents of cooked food from her own fire, she may help them and receive presents in return; but they have no rights over her fields or her food, only her husband and herself. And the fields which are hoed by a bachelor son belong to his own mother, who in her turn cooks food for him to eat.

Each wife has either a hut to herself, or else a separate alcove in a large hut, and there she has her fire for cooking. She fetches her own firewood and water or sends an unmarried daughter for them.

At meals the ages and the sexes eat separately; in some polygynous families each wife sends a dish to the husband, in others the wives take it in turns to cook for him. The husband eats alone or with neighbours of his own age[1] to share his dish, the older boys and their friends[1] eat separately from the younger children, and each mother again usually eats with her own daughters, apart.

In the relationship of husband and wife the chief elements are sexual intercourse, co-operation in work, the procreation of children and factors of personal inclination, character and temperament. By men women are praised for sexual skill, cleanliness and beauty, for good cooking and hard work, for their fecundity, and for gentleness of speech and behaviour, and those with opposite qualities are criticized. Among women men are praised for sexual skill and attentiveness, for vigour in hoeing and skill in house-building, and for kindness; while sexual neglect, laziness, impotence and cruelty are disliked and may cause a woman to leave her husband for another man.

The birth of children is a most important factor in the marriage relationship, for children are greatly desired both by men and women. They are desired for themselves and also because they bring their parents wealth and prestige; a boy will one day work in the fields of his father and mother, a girl will bring in cattle from her marriage. And the possession of children brings compliments and respect both to man and woman.

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[1] *Vide infra* "*The Age-Village*."

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

As the boys one by one reach the age of ten or eleven, two important changes usually take place in their lives. Firstly they leave the herding of cows to their younger brothers, and themselves begin the business of hoeing the fields which will occupy them until they die; and secondly they no longer sleep in the houses of their fathers but join an age-village of boys. These two changes usually, but not always, take place at the same time and normally at about the age of ten or eleven years, well before puberty. But there are cases where special circumstances put the age of one or both of these changes later; I know one boy who herds his father's cattle although he has reached puberty, because he has no younger brother old enough to take over, and there are only five or six boys in his herd-group altogether. And in general I am told it is not uncommon for some boys who have reached puberty to be found still herding cattle. Again in one age-village the boys leave home a little later than usual because there are leopards about and it is dangerous for small boys to walk from the village of their fathers to that of the boys after dark.

(*b*) *The Boys' Village*

When a fair number of the sons of a village of married men have reached the right age, their fathers give them a piece of land to one side of the parent village on which to build. There they build little huts of reeds for themselves, sufficiently well-thatched to keep out the heavy rain, and there they sleep. The building of the huts on this land begins, in a playful manner, before the boys move. While they are still herding the cows and sleeping at home they build miniature huts there in their spare time, but do not sleep in them. When they move they build slightly more substantial huts with a better thatch. Until he marries each boy hoes his father's fields in his father's village and eats food cooked by his own mother at his father's house. But he sleeps with his friends. Thus between the time when he leaves home and his marriage each is a member of two villages, economically he still belongs to that of his father, socially to that of his own contemporaries. Though bachelors eat at their parents' homes, it is very rarely that they do not eat in the company of their own friends. A bachelor does not simply go home to eat but a group of bachelors, friends of the same boys'-village, go round together eating at the house of each one's mother in turn.

In an age-village of married men there are always several different herds of cattle; and it is not only those from the same group of herd-boys that set up a new village together, but all the sons of the age-village. When a boy leaves the herd-group he joins a larger community, including the friends of his own age who have herded cows with him, but many

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

when we went to a field I saw a stick of a special type upright in the soil. It was made of a reed split at the top, with a small bundle of leaves squeezed in the split. A piece of bark stood out from this bundle. I asked the chief for the significance of this and he explained that it was an *ulusingo*, i. e. a tabu sign to prevent anyone from stepping on the field which was an *imasibi* (yam-field). This sign was believed to possess "magical power", to strike an invader with illness. Each owner of a field has the right to protect his field in such a manner, and a chief especially has the right to command tabus regarding plants which are staple food for the whole chieftainship, as, for instance, maize that is not allowed to be reaped before the chief has given his permission. All such tabus are also named *mwiko*[32]. During the time of such a general tabu, visitors, who by chance come through a village under tabu, are not allowed to greet the inhabitants of the village or to speak to them.

The chief added that special watchmen are installed during these periods; these men are dressed in a terrifying manner, and have the right to arrest any person transgressing the tabu. The chief may punish the offenders immediately, imposing on them, for instance, a cow as a fine. This was also the case with an ordinary theft in a field, but nowadays such affairs are regulated by the law of the Mandated Government. After the repeal of such a general tabu by the chief, beer will be drunk (e. g. *ubwalwa bwa kutagila bwa kutondelo*, the beer that is poured out at the harvest), and the usual eating community of men will be re-established, for Nyakyusa men like to eat together as comrades, not in families.

10. When I was in Katumba, dances were held on several days from the afternoon till midnight, very similar in form to that which Mackenzie describes (p. 160) by the name *Ikimbimbi*.

The men stood on one side of the open place in several lines, with sticks in their hands; on the opposite side were the women and girls. Between them, more in the background, were the drummers, at the beginning of the dance; then they moved round the place. The principal drummer was a man of great excitability. He performed most extravagant movements with his body and his drumstick, making somersaults, jumping over the drum, treating it as a "living being", running to it and turning just in front of it.

[32] This word *mwiko* (forbidden) has the same wide (profane and ritual) meanings as *tapu* or *tabu* in the Polynesian Languages (*cf. Rud. Lehmann*: Die polynesischen Tabu-Sitten. Staatl. Forschungsinstitut für Völkerkunde I, 18; Leipzig 1930).

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

but I was astonished that this trap was erected relatively near to my tent on the border of the village of Katumba.

6. Fishing. Fishing is a much more common practice with the Nyakyusa than hunting. The old-established custom of poisoning fish in their smaller rivers is still widely used. The poison is derived from the *unkeredu* shrup. Its branches and leaves are broken off, reduced to small pieces between stones and then packed in a covering of grass to resemble a long cigar about 1 meter in length and 25 cm in width. The bundles prepared in such a manner are fixed between two rowes of stones placed across the river for this purpose. The poison gradually diffuses into the water, which takes on a green colour. The fish are soon affected by the poison and rise to the surface with gaping mouths. They are then easily caught with a scoop made from bamboo. The open end of a piece of bamboo is split into several sections and the splinters are bent apart and tied together with raffia to form a sort of funnel[1]. The fish are strung through their gills on small pliable sticks and roasted at home over a fire. All people are allowed to join in this fishing which to them is always a festive occasion in the cooler season.

Fishing in broader and deeper rivers, such as the lower Kiwira, is done by means of large fish-traps. They are made and repaired by men on the banks of the river. The traps are attached to poles rammed into the bed and almost invariably boats trying to reach the Lake Nyassa get struck on submerged poles. These large fish-traps strung across the river form quite an impressive sight. Looking up-stream, they look like the bows of little ships standing in a row.

7. Preparing food. With the Nyakusa the preparation of food is so exclusively the task of the women, that R. Thurnwald ist quite correct when says (Black and White in East Africa, London 1935, p. 157): "Menfolk starve if there are no women to prepare their meals". There is thus a very strong division of labour between the sexes, also noticable in the carrying of loads. For a young man to carry the load of an old woman or his sweetheart, whom perchance he might meet on the road, would be a grave violation of a rigid custom.

As the preparation of the food is the women's duty, also the grinding *(ukutika)* of the corn in a mortar *(ikituli)* with a pestle *(ikitiro)* which is the exclusive task of the female sex. The wife is always the first to rise in the morning to prepare breakfast. Usually, however, this is not

[1] NB. They are of the same kind as those of the Hottentots along the Great Fish River in South West Africa.

462 252 264

very substantial, the main meal being taken in the evening shortly before sunset.

415 [354] *8. Manufacture.* The pot for cooking *(indeku)* is placed on three stones which form the hearth *(ikipembero,* hearth stones). The flat bowl made of clay used for the needs of the kitchen is called *ulwangabia* and a pig pot used for storing water *ingumbe*. The pots of clay 415 439 are manufactured by Kissi women because in their land on the north-eastern shores of Lake Nyassa the best clay is found. In the eastern part of the Nyakyusa country adjacent to Kissi land the women visit the pottery markets of the Kissi, but to the remoter villages, e. g. around the Rungwe volcano the pottery is brought by Kissi men. In this case, owing to the great distance from the Kissi-Land the men carry the loads of eight to ten pots on their head between split poles of bamboo. The Kissi pots I saw in the Rungwe Station were ornamented in [462] a rough way with red ochre and seemed only slightly baked. The [324] hearth stones, however, are made by the Nyakyusa women themselves as I was able to observe near Rutenganio, where widows manufactured them for sale.

285 [462] In many villages of the Nyakyusa I could watch basket-making. This I saw being done by men. In the chief's hut in Katumba I had the [237] opportunity to admire a great number of very big baskets *(ifitubo)* for storing grain, smeared with cow dung on the outside. The attractive closely wickered baskets, which are filled with *malesi* (millet) and then [273] placed in water for a night in the process of beer-brewing were originally made by the Buanyi, but nowadays also the Nyakyusa are said to be skilled enough to weave them. I had no opportunity to observe it, but could acquire an excellent specimen of that wicker-work.

264 [515] *9. The Meal.* At the beginning of each meal the hands are washed, including those of children. The men take their meal separately from the women. The wives only eat when their husbands have been satisfied. Boys under ten years eat with their mothers, but as soon as they begin to live in age-set villages, they eat together with their friends of their own age-set, as described in detail by Mr. G. Wilson in his "Introduction of Nyakyusa Society" (Bantu Studies X, p. 271). The head of the family likes to eat together with his friends.

262 [192] Meat is eaten very seldom, but on special occasions such as marriages, death lamentations, christenings of Christianized natives, enormous quantities are devoured. *Inyama* (Swahili: *nyama)* is the Nyakyusa word for all sorts of meat, *ingombe* for that of cattle and *ingambaku* for that of oxen. Near Utengule I saw black pigs *(inguruwe,* pig)

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

grubbing for food outside the stable. Old people also eat the meat of apes *(salila*, ape) and of jakal *(ingebe)*. The Nyakyusa men are generally very fond of eating fowl, indeed: *"Wakugana inyama sya inguku"*, they are fond of the flesh of fowl.

Bones are usually given to the children for gnawing. Eight to ten boys may be seen sitting in a circle and alternately gnaw on the same bone, often drinking a little milk *(ulukama)* the while.

During a boating on Lake Nyasa I saw the well-known columnar clouds formed by the so-called Kungu-flies in the distance above the surface of the water. These flies are also eaten by the peoples on the shore of the Lake. When these insects come shore-wards they are caught, roasted at home and then eaten. But I was told that sometimes they are also caught and eaten out on the Lake, being squeezed into lumps between the hands.

The Nyakyusa eat with the right hand, but when the meal consists of such food as boiled maize and beans *(ingate)* they also use spoons *(uluiko)* made of folded strips of banana leaves. Nowadays, however, tin spoons and tin plates have come into wide use. The ancient eating-mats *(akatefu*, diminutive of *urutefu)* are also being more and more displaced.

When the meal is over, the vessels and plates are cleaned with the fingers, bent inward, and then licked off. The mouth is rinsed out with water.

10. Diet. The vegetable diet is roughly the following. The light meal in the morning consists mostly of boiled maize-cobs *(ingate)*, sweet potatoes *(imbatata)*, bananas *(ilitoki*, pl. *amatoki)*, roasted bananas; or, *amawifu*, sweet bananas. The main meal in the evening, shortly before sunset, usually consists of flour porridge *(ikiyindi)*, beans *(indima)*, both often boiled together with maize, peas *(efinyaga)* very often in the form of porridge, maize-corns *(ikirombe)* and groundnuts *(isyabala*, pl. *amasyabala)*. These groundnuts are dried in the sun on mats. Bananas, if dried in the same manner, are usually halved lengthwise and spread out sometimes on banana leaves. I have seen this done in the village of Katunba. Granary stores are very often, e. g. near Utengule (on the border of Nyakyusa and Safwa culture), erected on platforms supported by poles. The container is a big quadrangular basket, roughly three by three meters in length and 1 m in height. The roof has the shape of a large Chinese hat and can be taken off from the lower part of the granary.